NOTES FOR REMARKS

by

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Dr. Brock Chisholm was the first Director General of the World Health Organization. He was one of an extraordinary group of Canadians who played constructive roles in fashioning the world into a multinational community - at Bretton Woods, at Quebec City (where FAO was founded), at San Francisco, and elsewhere. Dr. Chisholm used to say that the mark of a mature person was his awareness of the future, and his acceptance of responsibility for that future. An infant, said Dr. Chisholm, has no sense of time but the present. A two year old can look forward a few hours, perhaps to a meal. A six year old thinks ahead several months. An adolescent is planning his life career, and a mature adult is concerned for the future of his children and his grandchildren, and works to that end.

Planning ahead an entire generation is an incredibly difficult exercise, so rapid is the element of change. Consider the changes witnessed by those persons still alive, born at the turn of this century. The transport age, the nuclear age, the space age have all become commonplace in their lifetimes. Mass communications and mass consumption. Electro-cardiography, cellophane, radio-telescopes, antibiotics, colour photography, nylon, computers, re-combinant DNA. World wars and regional wars and local wars. The end of colonialism; the beginning of television. Oral contraceptives, political terrorism, environmental degradation, nuclear

proliferation. All these made time more intense, more expansive.

As challenging as is the contemplation of this expansiveness of time and its hospitality for innovation and creativity, equally awe-inspiring and seemingly even more difficult to comprehend is the opposite phenomenon which has occurred in spatial terms, where too many people place too much demand on too few resources. Not expansion here but reduction, not creativity but destruction, not freedom but dependence. Another 20th century Canadian, Marshal McLuhan coined the phrase descriptive of this phenomenon. "The Global Village", he called it. Barbara Ward employed a different idiom but with the same sense - "Spaceship Earth".

No previous generation has been required to make such quantum conceptual adjustments or to face simultaneously a temporal explosion and a spatial implosion. Our survival as a human race will depend on our acceptance of both phenomena. Yet all too often the evidence suggests we are failing in each respect. The Yugoslavian leader Djilas summed up that evidence brilliantly when he wrote "We are all living in tomorrow's world today, still using yesterday's ideas". Pierre Trudeau's response: "The challenge of future world social and political events will not be met by a stagnant, cautious attitude. We must anticipate, not react; we must think, not conform; we must have courage to discard conventional wisdom in our quest for a secure and peaceful world".

But are we able? Can we constrain our territorial imperative and accept responsibility as stewards of this great devise which we temporarily inhabit? Are we capable of envisaging human relations in a spherical sense

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or are we so non-Euclidian that our perspectives are confined to linear axes - East-West, North-South? We have not much time to adjust, for events are overtaking our ability to control them, and at a bewildering pace:

- already, of the world's 150 plus countries, more than 100 are in food-deficit positions, consuming more food than they produce;
- the destruction of the world's forest cover is proceeding at a pace that, if unchecked, will halve the world's stock of wood by the year 2000 according to the Brandt Commission;
- by that same year 2000 the world's population will, at a minimum, be 2 billion larger than it is today - the equivalent of one new Bangladesh each year for 20 years.

What preparations are in hand for these changes? What steps are being taken to remedy the already-existing difficulties? What world leaders are approaching these issues in global terms? What degree of maturity, in Brock Chisholm's terms, prevails in 1981?

Very little in each case. The three worlds - OECD, Comecon, and G-77 - scarcely co-exist, let alone cooperate. The first and third regard one another as weary adversaries; the other is disdainful of any southern involvement; first and second struggle on an East-West axis. None professes to an ability to prosper in isolation from the others. Yet none is willing to take the steps necessary to ensure that the common goal of all three groupings - a functioning, self-sustaining international community - is brought into being. Such a community demands the existence

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of four ingredients, three factual and one attitudinal:

(i) economically resilient and politically stable countries;

(ii) a strong and equitable international trading and monetary system;

(iii) acceptable mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes;

(iv) a dedication on the part of all national actors to an enhancement of human dignity.

A pre-condition even to those ingredients is the existence and preservation of a wholesome natural environment.

The approach to these issues by each of the three worlds is alarmingly disparate and not likely, unless broad changes are introduced, to achieve the proclaimed common goal. One of those changes, I am convinced, is an abandonment of policies that focus along linear axes, in favour of the global. Nations began at Stockholm to think of environmental issues in terms of a single biosphere. The poisoning of the atmosphere and of the oceans is not an issue that can be dealt with except on a multilateral basis. Nor can infectious diseases or food shortages or many other international concerns.

A continued concentration along linear perspectives leads as well to the assumption that all relationships are measurable in zero-sum terms. Nothing so poisons the negotiating process as that attitude. Additionally, concentration along axes leads to the diversion of attention and the exhaustion of energies in non-cooperative activities. Northern emphasis on security - be it West or East - has the effect of forcing the South to shift its emphasis away from socio-economic issues and to concentrate much less upon developmental goals.

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Examples abound.

Perceiving increasing Western support for the Republic of South Africa, whether that perception be accurately based or not, the states of Africa are turning their attention from economic development to international political responses. The African Co-ordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement is holding a special meeting at the Foreign Minister level in Algiers this very day. The Non-Aligned will seek as well immediately thereafter a special meeting of the U.N. Security Council to consider this issue. The demand will be for a meeting outside of New York (on the precedent of the 1972 Security Council meeting in Addis Ababa which discussed African issues).

Such shifts of emphasis and energy create a danger that structures now in place, and activities now underway, will suffer if accommodation is not found. In graphic contrast are the views - in the Central American context - of U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig and Belize Premier George Price as to the cause of political unrest.

Haig: "The Soviets have a set of priority targets in Central America, a 'hit list' if you will".

Price: "...the only issue that counts in Central America is the North-South dialogue. If you don't bring stability and justice to the markets in sugar or coffee, you will never have stability and justice in the countries that produce them".

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In 1981 there will be several extraordinary gatherings of statesmen where these points of view will strive for supremacy, or for accommodation:

- the Western Economic summit, Ottawa, July;
- the U.N. Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, Nairobi, August (the Preparatory Committee of which Conference is now holding its Third Session in New York);
- the North-South Summit, Cancun, Mexico, late October;
- the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Melbourne, Australia, September-October, 1981.

Given the complexity of the problems - a rapidly increasing world population even as birth rates decline in some regions; continuing depletion of non-renewable resources, and serious threats to some that are renewable such as forests and fresh water; absolute limits now upon us of arable land acreage suitable for production of food crops; the crushing debt burden now borne by the developing countries because of their oil import bill; - all the talents and energies of the world would be sorely tested in seeking solutions even absent the compulsions of East-West tensions.

The world is now facing several unprecedented circumstances: liquidity is at an all-time high, but funds are largely unavailable for public sector disposition. Thus the International Development Association (IDA) is unable to undertake orderly forward planning; the proposed World Bank "energy affiliate" is likely still-borne; the Common Fund agreement was signed last June 30 but finances have not yet come forward; U.N. Global Negotiations - part of the International Development Strategy agreed to at the General Assembly last fall - are hung up on two items: energy and international finance.

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Where lies the burden to initiate forward movement? The Brandt Commission established clearly that change is required on the part of all actors. The unquestionable obligation of the industrialized countries is properly given great emphasis by all observers - to increase resource transfers, to share institutional power, to unblock the transfer of technology, to ease protectionist trading policies. All this, and more, is required. Less, understandably, is heard of the obligations of the developing countries. Yet obligations there are, and these - undischarged - give excuse to the North to drag its heels and hesitate to cooperate fully.

One such obligation, one that is being met increasingly but unevenly, is a sound preparation of the economic case. Hortatory pronunciations in New York and at international conferences are not credible alternatives to factual, sophisticated, circumstantial analyses and prescriptive propositions. The Commonwealth Secretary General, Shridath Ramphal (a member of the Brandt Commission), has proposed the creation of a southern OECD to ensure the soundness of methodology and the adequacy of preparation. The proposal has not been universally welcomed. In my judgement, something of the sort is very much needed. Without a qualified mechanism to ensure the balance and the correctness of national figures, and the intellectual honesty of conclusions derived therefrom, the international community is held hostage to interpretive argument. The dangers are considerable; national governments in all parts of the world are understandably reluctant to disclose in all instances the full state of their economic condition. Emperors, whether they call themselves Prime Ministers or Presidents, seldom declare voluntarily that they have no clothes. I worry very much about the quality of those United Nations and other multilateral

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activities which depend upon unaudited, untested inputs.

The victims, always, of tendentious interpretations are the poor. But the greater victim is the vehicle we call international cooperation. The willingness of the publics in the northern democracies to support policies of the kind proposed by the Brandt Commission will depend upon the dedication of southern governments - not always democratic in nature - to reduce the disparity in living standards between the privileged and the non-privileged within their own countries. The illustration is most dramatic as between rural and urban dwellers. Distribution of incomes is badly skewed, and with the imbalance there grows an ever-widening gulf between the quality and quantity of goods and services at the disposition of the two ends of the income scale. The difference in standard of life between these two groups within developing countries exceeds any differences overall between industrialized and developing nations. It represents an explosive threat to political stability and orderly processes. Without a concerted effort to introduce a greater component of social justice into these environments as well as into the international environment, the likelihood of success of developmental processes diminishes greatly. This effort will require, of course, effective national systems of income re-distribution, based upon an equitable, accepted and respected taxation system. It is a sobering fact that such systems are commonplace in the North, rare in the South.

Still another obligation of developing countries is a dedication to food self-sufficiency. As I indicated a few moments ago, very few developing countries are not in a food deficit position. And few are exhibiting the discipline required to design and implement the national

nutritional policies required; policies which include the multiple ingredients of research, investment, and production incentives; policies which must reflect both the production and the consumption components. Evidence of the need on each side is abundant; nor are remedies beyond reach. Example: IRRI, the International Rice Research Institute, estimates that the world's annual rice yield per crop is 1.8 tons per hectare. Without any change in seed, and with no additions of fertilizer, water, insecticides or pesticides, but only the application of sound husbandry of the soil - meaning practices such as ploughing and weeding - that yield could increase by 67% to 3 tons per hectare. An immense increase with no expenditures other than an educational effort. Example: IFPRI, the International Food Policy Research Institute, has demonstrated that the poor spend the bulk of any income increment on food. In India, persons in the lowest 20 per cent of the income scale spend 60% of any such increment on food grains, and 85 to 90% on food and agricultural commoditiesin total. Yet, at the other end of the income spectrum - those in the top 10% - 5% of any income increment is spent on grain and only 35% on all food and agricultural commodities. Quite clearly, additional income in the hands of the poor is a much more powerful locomotive of food consumption (thereby acting as a production incentive) than is additional income for the rich.

A final obligation on the part of Southern governments is the exercise of greater discretion before adopting the life styles and the values of the industrialized countries. If those projections from north to south continue to emphasize material affluence and economic gain as the supreme goal, urban life as the most desirable, the accumulation of personal

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comfort at the expense of the disadvantaged as an acceptable norm, then the likelihood of broad Southern accomplishment will be severely hampered, if not suffocated. I say this totally cognizant of the burden upon the industrialized nations to remedy their own deficiencies in these respects.

How then to change all these attitudes? My continuing suggestion - to depart from an adversarial, competitive state of mind and to approach these issues as joint endeavours pursuing common goals on a global scale. Quite clearly there exists today a developmental divide, North on one side, South on the other. This divide reflects the popular mood of indifference now prevalent in the North and the sense of frustration now so evident in the South. To penetrate this divide there is required a measure of human involvement in the North and a measure of human benefit in the South. Of the dire need for both there can be no doubt. All evidence points to the fact that, if present trends continue, the world in the year 2000 will be more crowded, more polluted, less wholesome ecologically, and more vulnerable to economic, social and political disruption than the world we live in at the present.

Nowhere can men and women sit back waiting for forward movement on the part of others. The responsibility is universal and it is singular. We cannot delay for some future time either the images or our responses. Albert Camus had an answer for that temptation. In his novel "The Fall", he wrote: "Don't wait for the Last Judgement. It takes place every day".